



High Quality
Patient Centered
Cost-Effective Health Care

From Dr. Katz

FAST FACTS

A Message From the Director



Isn't the story about the 125th anniversary of the ambulance service (to the right of this column) great? It reminds us that while technology changes (we certainly don't have any ambulances drawn by horses), human needs don't change. People still get too sick to get themselves to the hospital or from facility to facility and our committed EMTs transport them. Happy Birthday DHS Ambulance Services! The celebration makes you wonder what health care will be like 125 years from now. My guess would be that while technology will continue to change (perhaps 125 years from now we will transport patients by beaming their molecules from home to hospital the way they do on Star Trek), but human needs will not. We will still get sick. We will still need the comfort of a nurse and a thoughtful doctor.

On the subject of change, thank you to those of you who have contributed to the discussion of how DHS, along with the Departments of Mental Health and Public Health, can work together more closely to better serve the needs of the patients, consumers, and residents of Los Angeles County. I particularly enjoyed the town halls at Olive View-UCLA Medical Center, High Desert Regional Health Center, and Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, and appreciate SEIU 721 for convening them. A lot of great ideas have come forward along with important cautions to make sure that if we come together under a single agency, we preserve the best of what each department does.

The start of Spring is subtle in Los Angeles since it is almost always beautiful here. But I am grateful that my parents who are 92 and 87 years of age, living alone in the snowbelt of New York, which has had a lot of snow this year including on the second day of Spring, have survived the winter. I keep trying to convince them unsuccessfully to move to Los Angeles to live with me. Of late, when they complain about the frigid temperatures of New York and all the snow, I say to them: "Too bad you don't have a son who lives in a warm beautiful place who wants you to move in with him." Any of you dealing with aging parents will see the humor in this.

Best wishes.



County Ambulance Service Celebrates 125 Years

By Michael Wilson

The year was 1890 and Los Angeles was a commercial and cultural hub. The city was oil-rich, the Mulholland, Van Nuys, and Doheny families were shaping the city's future, the San Pedro port was built, and a new electric railway was connecting residents from downtown to Pasadena. Refrigerated freight cars brought California oranges and visions of citrus groves and a warm climate to the Midwest. The population boom brought wealth and health-

the first horse-drawn carriage to today's fleet of Mercedes-Benz models, the service has played an essential role in ensuring the safe transport of patients in the County's care.

"At one time each County-run hospital had its own internal ambulance service, own budget, and individual dispatch center up until 1981," explains James Eads,

Chief of Disaster Response for the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Agency. "The dispatch centers were consolidated at



County Hospital ambulance team circa 1940.

LAC+USC Medical Center, then later at Ferguson and now in Santa Fe Springs." Today's sophisticated ambulance operations are run from the Central Dispatch Office (CDO) that is staffed by nine dispatchers, a dispatch supervisor, and a program head. The office handles about 3,000 calls a month with 24/7/365 operations. Although the CDO does not receive 9-1-1 calls, it can receive emergency requests during disas-

(See 'AMBULANCE' on back)



Amytis Towfighi to Head Neurology Services and Innovation

By Michael Wilson

Dr. Amytis Towfighi has been appointed director of neurological services and innovation for DHS. She will be responsible for spearheading departmental strategic initiatives aimed at improving quality of care and outcomes for patients with neurologic conditions, and developing multidisciplinary task forces comprised of individuals from the four DHS hospitals and Ambulatory Care Network. She joined DHS in 2007 and developed an Acute Neurology Unit at

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ters or major emergencies. The CDO then contacts private providers for those added resources or may draw from its own fleet. The ambulances are staffed by Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) on two shifts who can give basic life support and first-aid. They primarily transport patients that need ancillary services, such as dialysis and radiology, or who need to be moved to another County facility. The 20-vehicle fleet is stored across several sites: the Ferguson annex, Harbor-UCLA and Olive View-UCLA Medical Centers, and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Outpatient Center. Eads says the ambulance program is an important public service that operates behind the scenes and helps the department meet its mission. One of its most unique features is the longevity of the 67 employees. “If you look at the ambulance industry nationally, it’s a young person’s game and a stepping stone for paramedic school or fire services. Our people are long-term career-oriented, and a few have nearly 40 years of experience.” With the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, there’s been a modest decline in transport calls as insurers have contracted with private ambulance companies. However in booms or busts, there will always be those who depend on the County for medical care. “This is the ambulance service of last hope for the medically indigent, we are the safety net.”



County Ambulance Services through the years.

LAC+USC Hosts Wellness Day for Residents and Fellows

By Tonia Jones, Ph.D. and Tatum Korin, Ed.D.

A steady stream of hard-working physicians-in-training packed hospital conference rooms and filled up on generously donated food and healthy snacks, chair and table massages, health information and consultation, yoga and meditation, and much more at the first annual Residents and Fellows Wellness Day held January 21. It began as a simple concept six months ago, but eclipsed all expectations when 400 residents and fellows attended various portions of the day. “We believed the gesture of encouraging self-care and wellness from an institutional perspective would have a significant impact on the morale and health practices of the frontline caregivers such as the residents and fellows,” said event co-chair and Graduate Medical Education (GME) assistant dean Tatum Korin, Ed.D. The event was sponsored by the GME Office, the USC Keck School of Medicine, the Office of Patient Safety, hospital administration, CARES, and the Committee of Interns and Residents (CIR), and organized by a tireless and dedicated team of planning committee members with support from clinical department and program heads, faculty, and local



community businesses. Presentations on mindfulness by the esteemed Dr. Allen Weiss and Dr. David Black from *MindfulUSC* were very well attended. CIR organizers from around the state in attendance commented that they want to replicate the program at their respective hospitals. “One resident told me this was the best day since getting into medical school,” said GME director Lawrence Opas, MD. LAC+USC chief executive Dan Castillo added, “Ever since last year’s CLER site visit from the ACGME, we’ve been thinking of ways to improve the hospital’s engagement with its residents and to let them know how critically important they are to the success of the hospital. This event was a big leap towards making that a reality.”

And Another Thing...

DHS and health advocacy organization Maternal and Child Health Access (MCHA) received a \$50,000 in February from Health Net to support "We Got You Covered" trainings for 500 community clinic enrollers. The enrollers will learn to identify which health coverage options are available for patients (i.e. Medi-Cal, Covered CA, My Health L.A.) and assist them in completing applications for coverage programs. Pictured (L to R): MCHA director of training Liz Ramirez, DHS director Mitchell Katz, MD, and Health Net director of public affairs Carol Kim.



Special Olympics Volunteers Needed



Los Angeles will proudly host the 2015 Special Olympics World Games from July 25th through August 2nd. With 7,000 athletes representing 177 countries, volunteers are needed to provide a memorable and unique experience for the Special Olympics athletes. There will be opportunities to cheer on the athletes, be more hands on and work in the “Field of Play,” or provide medical assistance to the athletes through the Healthy Athletes program. With prior manager approval, County employees will be able to support the 2015 Special Olympics World Games by volunteering on county time. More details about the various volunteer opportunities and how to apply will be distributed shortly. In addition to our volunteer efforts, DHS has accepted the task of raising money to help these athletes achieve their dreams. It costs over \$2,500 for an athlete to participate in the Special Olympics. Help DHS meet its \$5,000 fundraising goal by visiting the fundraising page that has been set up by your facility and contributing to this great cause.

(‘TOWFIGHI’)

Rancho Los Amigos Rehabilitation Center designed to decompress the LAC+USC hospital and ensure that patients admitted with neurological diagnoses received prompt diagnostic evaluations and early rehabilitation. Her research focuses on revealing sex, age, and race/ethnic disparities in cardiovascular care and outcomes, and implementing clinical interventions aimed at reducing these disparities and improving quality of care for vulnerable individuals. “I am thrilled to have the opportunity to implement multidisciplinary interventions aimed at improving lifestyle habits, cardiovascular risk factor control, access to care, quality of care, patient experience, and patient outcomes for our vulnerable patient population with neurologic and cardiovascular disease.” She is currently conducting a randomized controlled clinical trial of a care manager/ community health worker outpatient intervention aimed at improving risk factor control after stroke or transient ischemic attack; patients are recruited from LAC+USC, Harbor-UCLA, Olive View-UCLA, and Rancho. Towfighi received her undergraduate degree from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and medical degree from Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. She completed Neurology residency at Massachusetts General Hospital and Brigham and Women’s Hospital, and vascular neurology fellowship at UCLA.